

Ultimate Project 5.0

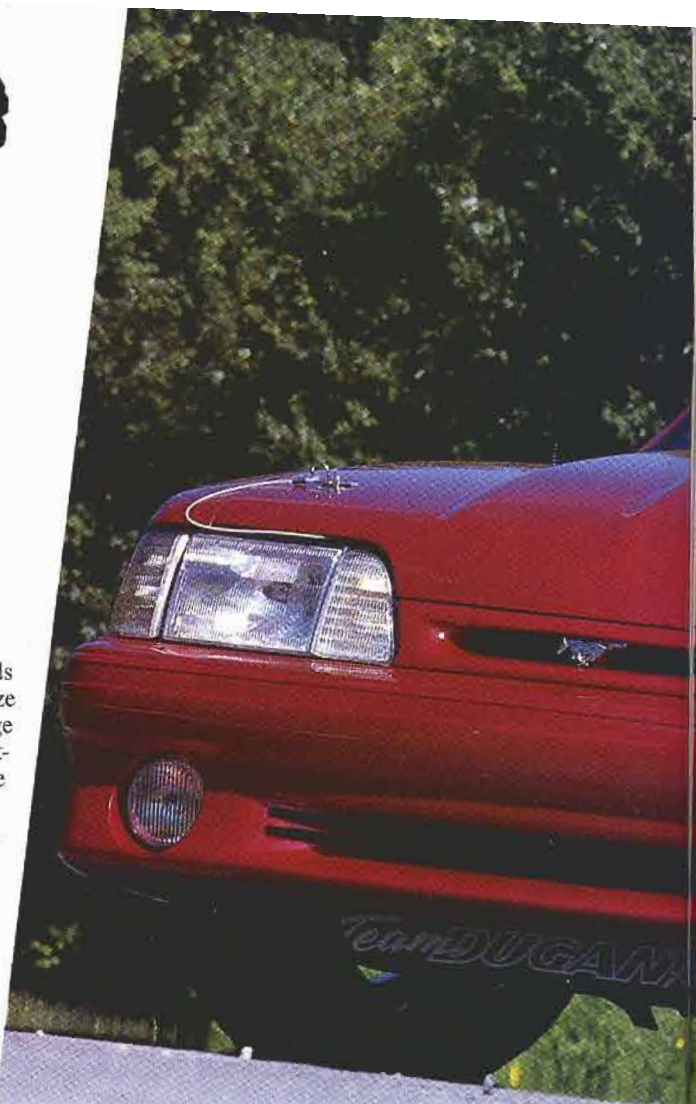
Super Viper hits the street

by Donald Farr
photography by Tom Shaw

The abundance of '87-'93 5.0 Mustangs on car lots and in classifieds is what started Project Super Viper. We were shooting the 5.0 breeze with Dugan Racing's Tom Dugan when the subject turned to the huge potential of used Mustangs now available. With some obtainable for as little as \$3000 (for an '87 LX hardtop or even a GT hatch), they are prime fodder for building a low-dollar 5.0 street machine.

These cars come with all the hot factory trimmings — 225 hp V8s,
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To clean up the factory swiss-cheese look, Project Super Viper's inner fenders are covered with Dugan Racing's molded fiberglass Inner Fender Apron Covers. When painted to match the car, the panels hide the factory inner fenders to provide a cleaner, tidier underhood appearance. On Super Viper, the left-side cover mounts the MSD 6AL ignition box, Crane Cams' coil and CarTech fuel pressure regulator.



stout 8.8 rearends, heavy-duty suspensions — plus the aftermarket has exploded with upgraded parts, so nearly every component needed to rebuild a late-model Mustang is available in a higher-performance version from *Super Ford* advertisers. By the end of the conversation, we were on our way to building the ultimate street 5.0.

Looking at the photos, it's difficult to believe that eight months ago the Super Viper was a well-used, much-abused 1987 GT hatchback with badly-faded paint and mismatched body panels. Tom Dugan found the car near Atlanta, purchased it for \$3000, then began rebuild-

ing the forlorn pony car into an all-around performance streetster with exciting handling and acceleration, plus the creature comforts of an upgraded interior and sound system.

Over the past four issues, we've covered Dugan's buildup/rebuild of Project Super Viper, a name derived from Dugan Racing's Viper package. The car has the Viper look with its Cobra grille insert, cowling induction hood and Dugan wing, but from there the concept stretches into the realm of super-street with a tweaked 306-inch, fuel-injected engine, a finely-tuned suspension and the improved interior. Granted, we started the project with a budget buildup in mind, and we did manage to curb our appetite for high-ticket items like superchargers and six-speed transmissions — at least for the moment. However, Tom Dugan's fertile mind churned out some optional upgrades,

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With the cover off to reveal the foursome of 10-inch Kicker speakers, you get idea of Project Super Viper's sound system capabilities. The speaker box, which resembles the enclosure found in the Saleen SSC models, works nicely with Dugan Racing's two-seat conversion package. For the Super Viper project, Tom Dugan cut and hinged the lower panels so they open for additional storage space.



like Laser Red paint from the 1994-'96 Mustangs and the leather-like saddle upholstery covering the seats, interior panels and roll bars. The result is an eye-appealing, rumbling, ultra-high-performance Mustang we will be proud to display in November's SEMA Show in Las Vegas.

As a recap for readers who may have missed some or all of the project buildup, our Super Viper Mustang was completely dismantled before going through four stages of construction — exterior, suspension, engine and interior — by Tom Dugan and his crew (Chris Smith, Frank Berman, John Hickey and Steve Cochran). Basically, it was like restoring a 10-year-old Mustang, only the replacement parts were for performance duty instead of replicating showroom condition. The major items are listed in the "Super Viper Components" sidebar, and, of course, all the particulars can be found in our previous four issues.



To fill the wheel wells, Dugan went with 17-inch, five-spoke Simmons FR-17 wheels, 9 inches wide for the front and 10 inches for the rear. Manufactured in Australia and distributed in the United States by AutoTrend, the three-piece modular wheels use Simmons' tricks to mount a large center (the same as Simmons' 18-inch wheel) to a 17-inch rim section. The result is a "large center, shallow rim" appearance which looks particularly good inside the Mustang's large wheel openings. Manufactured from 6061 aluminum, standard Simmons wheels are provided with a silver clear-coat finish, but Dugan chose to polish the wheels for a shinier look on Project Super Viper.

An ultimate street Mustang needs an ultimate street tire, so the Simmons' wheels were mounted with Z-rated Dunlop SP Sport 8000 tires. With 255/45s on the front and 275/40s on the rear, Project Super Viper puts down a wide footprint for great dry grip. For wet driving, which certainly happens in the real street world, the SP Sports' tread utilizes wide circumferential grooves to resist hydroplaning. Other highlights of the SP Sport, according to Dunlop, are rigid tread blocks for reduced tread squirm, a quiet ride and minimal ride harshness.

To protect the Laser Red paint, CoverCraft was called on for a front end bra and Evolution 3 car cover, while Saleen Performance provided one of their nifty service covers, a flannel-lined vinyl cover with a hard-plastic insert for protecting the fenders and front-end while working under the hood. We've observed these unique covers in use at Saleen, and they certainly seem like a smart idea for any owner who leads an active underhood life.

For another type of protection, a LoJack security system was installed. If Project Super Viper is stolen, the hidden LoJack transmitter will send a signal so state and local law enforcement agencies can track the car through their stolen vehicle recovery network. For more information, call (800) 53-LOJACK.

So now that we've built the ultimate street 5.0, what do we do with it? Drive it on the street, of course, with Tom Dugan also displaying Project Super Viper at shows and other automotive events. Once the street honeymoon is over, we plan to make additional modifications for open track road racing and, later, drag racing.

A street car that's also at home on the road course and the drag strip? Now that's ultimate.

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Sources:

AutoTrend
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Pulley Correction

In our engine buildup story (October '96), we got our signals crossed regarding the underdrive pulleys used on Super Viper. Somehow, we thought Dugan Racing installed Auto Specialties pulleys with March Performance covers. Of course, this is not possible because the Auto Specialties' pulleys are not drilled and tapped for the cover screws. In actuality, March Performance pulleys and covers were used.

